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ABSTRACT

In response to the need for professional growth opportunities for principals, the Indiana Principal Leadership Academy (IPLA) was founded in 1985. The IPLA was created to be a national training model for principals, as leaders of instructors, empowered with effective behaviors and practices. The academy's focus is on four proficiencies: (1) leadership; (2) communication; (3) culture; and (4) school programs. Four days of instruction are devoted to each proficiency over a 2-year period. During the leadership phase, self-awareness, learning styles, and values are emphasized. Oral, written, and nonverbal communication are second-phase components. The culture phase compares and contrasts school culture and climate, exploring how each can be positively influenced. School programs for reform are the focus of the fourth phase, as school improvements can only take place after assessment of needs, resources, and priorities. The IPLA's instructional model is based upon the "effective inservice model's" six components: (1) rationale; (2) delivery; (3) humor; (4) human development; (5) evaluation; and (6) celebration. Principals are asked to evaluate the program at the end of each session and when they graduate from the academy. (EJS)

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The Indiana Principal Leadership Academy: A Model for Professional Development

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The origin and development of IPLA

The Indiana Principal Leadership Academy was founded by the 1985 Indiana General Assembly as a part of then Governor Robert Orr's "A+" educational initiatives program. The Academy was developed as a response to the cries of professional educators for professional development opportunities for school principals. Effective schools research had pointed out the importance of the principal, yet the opportunities for professional growth for principals were extremely limited. With great insight the General Assembly passed House Bill 1236, the Indiana Principal Leadership Academy was born!

Research has clearly indicated that the school principalship is in transition. While principals were, at one time, applauded for being good managers, the expectations have now broadened to encompass instructional leadership. The Academy was created to provide for the continuing professional growth needs of Indiana's public school principals.

IPLA developed quickly after its birth under the guidance of Dr. Gerald DeWitt. To develop the concept of a leadership academy, DeWitt convened a think tank of over 70 people during the summer of 1985. Members of the think tank represented elementary, middle, and high school educators, universities and colleges, business leaders, superintendents and parents. The challenge before this group was to create a vision for the Indiana Principal Leadership Academy. Keeping in mind that a vision is a statement of the very best that one can imagine, stated in such a way that it already exists, this think tank developed the following vision:

> The IPLA is a national model for the training of principals as leaders of instructors. Through Academy experiences and educational challenges, these leaders are empowered with effective behaviors and proficiencies. Graduates of the Academy set the pace for statewide educational improvement and reform and are recognized as exemplary educational leaders in Indiana and throughout the country.

The IPLA vision statement has been the foundation from which all IPLA components have been developed. Goals, curriculum, program components, and proficiencies have each been derivatives of the vision.

IPLA Proficiencies

The Academy's curriculum is driven by its proficiencies. The curriculum is divided into four phases: Leadership, Communication, Culture, and School Programs. Four days of instruction, divided into two day blocks, are set aside for each phase. The first and last days of the Academy program are devoted to orientation and graduation, respectively.

Each and every presentation and activity of every session must support at least one of the proficiencies for that particular phase of the two-year professional growth program. While these proficiencies are the underpinnings for the Academy, we recognize that they must be fluid. A static curriculum does not address the everchanging principalship. Therefore, IPLA proficiencies are revisited and amended as necessary on a regular basis.

The Curriculum (Process and Content)

The IPLA professional development program is a two-year program. Over this period, principals are involved in eighteen days of on-site

instruction. Following each instructional session, principals are asked to apply the skills and knowledge they have attained in their "back-home" setting.

Throughout IPLA instruction, an emphasis is placed on both process and content. The need for principals to have the capacity to implement the new knowledge they have acquired is just as important as the knowledge itself. The Academy has identified more than 100 process skills that effective leaders use routinely to organize groups for action, motivate, and facilitate the work of others. Examples of more commonly recognized process skills would include brainstorming, reaching consensus, storyboarding, jig saw, clustering, force field analysis, fish bowl, and reflective writing.

The Academy also emphasizes the establishment of collegial and support teams through networking. Through such networks, the barriers of isolation are demolished. Principals are encouraged to use these networks beyond the Academy experience. To facilitate this networking, principals are divided into instructional groups of about 50 participants. Participants are assigned to groups on a homogeneous basis. Male and female, elementary, middle level, and high school principals are mixed within each instructional group. These groups remain intact throughout the two year program.

During the Leadership phase an emphasis is placed on self-awareness, learning styles, and values. It is IPLA's belief that one cannot hope to lead others without first learning about one's self. The content of this phase is drawn from the work of Anthony Gregorc, Bernice McCarthy, Clinton Bunke, Elias Porter, Gary Phillips and others. Back home application is

assured through Goal Action Plans. During the **Leadership** phase, principals are asked to develop and implement a plan for self-improvement, and for the improvement through leadership of another.

The second phase of IPLA instruction is **Communication**. A study by the Disney Corporation found that 96% of an organization's problems are likely due to faulty communication. This phase provides direct involvement of participants in oral communication (Angotti-Weber and Associates), written communication skills (Linda Comerford), non-verbal communication (Robert Dilts), and the role of technology in making communication more efficient and effective. Effective public relations and communication with the public are also focused on in this phase. Principals apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired through the development of school newsletters, school handbooks, writing for publication, speaking to the public, or by developing a marketing tool for their school.

School Culture is the third curricular phase. The writing and research of Terrence Deal, Larry Lezotte, and James Lewis, Jr., along with others provide the body of knowledge relating culture to effective schools. Four days of training allow time to compare and contrast the differences between school climate and school culture. Participants are challenged to explore how, as leaders, they can influence culture and climate in a positive way. To assist in this process, principals are expected to participate in a climate audit of other schools and have an audit conducted in their school. This develops camaraderie among participants as well as provides an opportunity for back home application.

The fourth phase of the curriculum is **School Programs**. Reforming and improving schools is a matter of assessing needs, identifying resources,

and establishing priorities. During this phase of IPLA curriculum, practitioners share their ideas and examples of successful school improvement models from across the nation. Along with other sources, the works of Michael Durso, Shirley Thornton, Wayne Jennings, and Joe Whelan are referred to. Topics include site-based management, effective instructional strategies, and supervision/evaluation of staff and programs. Principals are challenged to integrate their knowledge and skills in developing a school improvement plan for their schools.

Instructional Model

IPLA sessions are built around a research-based "effective inservice model". The model includes six components that must be included in instructional sessions.

1. **Rationale.** We must answer the question: "Why bother?" Why are we taking the participants' time and energy to address this topic?
2. **Delivery.** The Academy provides participants with up-to-date, research-based information. Consideration must be given to the variety of learning styles represented by the participants. Facilitators must make an effort to incorporate independent and small-group activity, avoiding excessive lecture time. A good ratio is 3 to 1: three parts content and one part process.
3. **Humor.** This is an integral part of any good presentation. Done in good taste, humor can provide variety and assist the learner in retaining significant information.
4. **Human Development.** Commonly referred to as HDA's, these are selected to foster team building and harmony. Such activities also establish a common feeling or climate for a group, which enhances productivity and satisfaction. Every meeting should include at least one HDA. Every HDA must effectively "hook" to the thematic focus.
5. **Evaluation.** Every Academy session is evaluated by participants. Evaluation forms the basis for program revision.
6. **Celebration.** This can be as simple as a handshake or as sophisticated as a dinner. The Academy believes that educators do not take time, typically, to recognize their accomplishments.

Assessment/Evaluation

Principals in the two year program participate in a pre- and post-assessment of skills and knowledge in each of the proficiencies. The self-assessment instrument is administered on Orientation Day and again at the end of each curricular phase and on Graduation Day. This process allows principals to assess their individual growth throughout the Academy.

Any healthy organization has a systematic plan for evaluation of the organization's workings and programs. The Academy has had four different summative type evaluations conducted. The Society of Retired Executives reviewed the Academy in 1988. School sites of past participants, superintendents, and principals were included in their evaluation. Following a summary, SRE offered a list of conclusions and recommendations to the Academy. Shelley Vaughn completed an evaluation study of the Academy's curriculum, processes, and other components of our program. Two Indiana University graduate students conducted a study of the Academy in 1989. Their report included five recommendations for the Academy. A Vanderbilt doctoral candidate recently completed her dissertation which evaluated some IPLA impacts. A number of graduate principals participated in a case study of the impacts the Academy has had on their schools. Each of these reports has indicated that the Academy is headed in the right direction as set by our vision and proficiencies. They have also recommended that the Academy curriculum continue to be fluid so that the everchanging needs of principal clients can be met.

In addition to these large scale evaluations, the Academy evaluates each and every session. Participants complete these forms at the conclusion of the session in the areas of content and presentation. These

evaluative data are used as formative tools to constantly review and reform the Academy's work.

Other IPLA Ventures

The two-year professional development program is the cornerstone of IPLA. The Academy also pursues other growth opportunities for school administrators. A newsletter, **Special Edition**, is published seven times a year with a focus on providing administrators with information that can be readily used in their schools. Every Indiana public school principal and superintendent is on the mailing list along with an evergrowing roll of other interested educators.

The **Neophyte Academy** is a four day intensive professional growth program for principals with three years or less experience and for assistant principals. This program is held during the summer. Themes for the Neophyte are on a three year cycle: Principal as a Change Agent, Principal as a Supervisor/Evaluator, and Principal as a Resource Expert.

The Academy is piloting a new program this school year. The **Advanced Level Academy** has been created to address the continuing professional needs of graduates of the two-year program. During this pilot phase, fifteen graduate principals have focused on achieving school improvement through cultural reform. The curriculum is designed to be an in-depth extension of the two-year Academy.

With the cooperation of the IPLA Alumni Board, the Academy has a continuing education program for graduates of the two year professional development program. The **IPLA Graduate Seminar** is an annual two day session that is open to all graduates and former peer facilitators.

Through the Graduate Seminar, participants are brought up to date on the IPLA curriculum and introduced to new ideas and concepts. An extra benefit is the opportunity to renew old friendships and networks along with establishing new ones.

Closing Comments

The Indiana Principal Leadership Academy has proven to be an effective model for the professional growth of Indiana principals. We believe that there are several reasons for that success. First, the Academy's curriculum is at the "cutting edge". Second, there is a shared focus on both content and process. Principals are given both the knowledge and the tools to apply this knowledge. Third, by spreading out the Academy over a two year period, principals have a long term commitment to professional development, plus they have the opportunity to practice what is learned before additional content is offered. Fourth, through group and peer facilitator networking, principal participants establish professional links with one another. These links are used in support, as sounding boards, and as resource bases.

We believe wholeheartedly that the ideas that have led to the success of IPLA can be transferred to other settings. They can be applied to settings both within education and outside the field. We strongly urge any interested parties to explore the practices of IPLA and how they apply to their areas of interest.